Major Course Overhaul Will Bring New Advantages for Students

By Lissa Behm-Morawitz

This academic year we are embarking on some exciting new changes to one of our core courses, Communication 2100: Media Communication in Society. COMM 2100 is a large-enrollment lecture course that satisfies a general education humanities credit for majors across MU, thus it is very popular! Approximately 750 students are served by this course each year. The wide reach of COMM 2100 across campus makes it a good avenue for drawing in new majors, and the course also provides our existing majors with an entry into the study of mass media. I am heading up a team of COMM 2100 teachers and ET@MO (Educational Technologies at Missouri) instructional designers to overhaul the instruction methods. With a grant from the Mizzou Course Redesign initiative to fund the project, plans are well underway.

Despite the past successes of this beloved course, the large-lecture format of COMM 2100 now feels like it is a remnant of a bygone era, and the problems a large-lecture class brings seem to outweigh any benefits. Thus, we are abandoning the mass lecture format and moving the course into a more interactive learning environment. I call this a “hybrid flip” model where technology will be used to communicate lecture material online, and class time will be “flipped” to focus solely on application of course material.

The COMM 2100 redesign project seeks to solve two main problems with the course. First, the traditional lecture-based format that goes along with a large-enrollment course conflicts with the best practices in teaching media literacy. The overarching goal of COMM 2100 is to enhance students’ media literacy.

For COMM 2100, we use the Center for Media Literacy’s definition of media literacy:

Media Literacy … provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. (CML, n.d.)

In the COMM 2100 redesign project, we endeavor to maximize our efforts to increase students’ media literacy. We place high value on students’ participation and engagement with media texts. Researchers and educators have long argued that media literacy is best achieved with hands-on learning activities, when the students practice applying media literacy skills, rather than listening to an instructor lecture about media literacy skills. As the class is now, the majority of the content is still delivered by the instructors, and the learning done in lecture is, for the most part, passive in nature, e.g., taking notes from presentation slides. Our primary goal of this redesign is to improve learning by making students more active and responsible for their learning.

The second issue with the large-lecture format of COMM 2100 is that in the context of our media literacy goals, we want to encourage students to produce and access media. It seems antithetical to these goals to restrict students’ access to their computers and other mobile devices during class time. However, the practical reality of 325+ students in a lecture hall with their computers handy is that we have a lot...
Dear Alums,

I am writing this on the fifth day of the first week of classes, fall 2013. Classes are in session, students have found their way, and faculty members are back in the saddle. I’m teaching the large section of Media in Society after a two-year hiatus, and I’m having a great time. The daughter of my former students, Robin Rees and Suzie Sample, is taking this class. Small world. Full Circles.

We are pleased to welcome Haley Kranstuber Horstman to the faculty; she brings with her great positive energy that is palatable when you’re with her. We had to bid farewell to two of our colleagues, Colin Hesse and Jennifer Aubrey, who both left us this summer for other teaching positions, Jennifer to University of Arizona and Colin to Oregon State University. They will be missed as friends, colleagues, mentors, and advisers. We will be searching for a new faculty member in organizational communication this fall semester and hopefully can add to the faculty ranks in mass media and interpersonal in the upcoming years. Melanie Booth-Butterfield, PhD ’85, has agreed to return to Mizzou to deliver the fifth bi-annual Loren Reid Lecture in the spring. Melanie is the Peggy Rardin McConnell Chair of Speech Communication at West Virginia University and the former undergraduate mentor and adviser to one of our current graduate students, Joy Cox. We look forward to having her with us.

The department Advisory Council continues to provide strong support and advice to the department. We will have a meeting in October to review our goals and determine ways in which the council and alumni can be helpful to us. I expect that they will be instrumental in helping us to carry out our celebration of the department’s 75th birthday. Yes, that’s right: we turn 75 years old in 2015. So hang on to your hats and be ready to help us celebrate in style.

Let me share with you a list of our learning objectives for the department that we now publicize to prospective majors:

Communication majors will learn how to:
- Navigate information-rich environments using communication theories and models
- Critically evaluate arguments and messages
- Effectively advocate their values, beliefs, and opinions using communication principles
- Create persuasive messages for a variety of contexts (public speaking, relationships, organizations, media) using verbal and nonverbal, written, and mediated communication
- Analyze communication research and critique its methods, arguments, and claims
- Work together in collaborative groups to set and accomplish common goals
- Exhibit professional and ethical standards in all communication contexts

We also use this to remind our current majors what it is that we’re all about in this program. I want these values and goals to remain in the foreground so students appreciate and seek these same goals. I like to think of this as the Missouri Communication model.

I’m working with a group of undergraduate students on what I’m calling the Alumni Project. We are trying to identify our alums: where they are, what are they doing, and would they be willing to be of assistance to current majors as they navigate internship opportunities and need advice about a career that focuses on a facet of the process of communication. I started this last year and will continue this for the remainder of the year, as long as I am here. If you want to make sure you’re included, please send me a note at portermj@missouri.edu.

As many of you know, this will be my last year in the department as chair and as a faculty member. I plan to retire this coming summer, 2014. Mitchell McKinney has already been selected as my replacement as chair, so I can help to mentor him this year and make sure we have a smooth transition. I came to Mizzou in 1979, and I will celebrate 35 years here this coming summer. I think that’s long enough. I’m ready to move on to other adventures—many places to visit, other projects to get involved with, people to meet, books to read, flowers to plant and cultivate, and byways to explore.

Any suggestions, advice, counsel, ideas are always appreciated. Just send them my way. Please stay in touch.

Best wishes,
Michael J. Porter
This spring three MU communication faculty members were designated as MU Global Scholars. Associate Professor Debbie Dougherty, Associate Professor Rebecca Meisenbach, and Assistant Teaching Professor Astrid Villamil represented the university on a 17-day trip to northeastern China in May.

The program encourages faculty to develop relationships for research and education with their counterparts in China and to develop a better understanding of Chinese culture, Chinese people, and Chinese society. In particular the trip helped the faculty prepare to host 17 undergraduate students from Shanghai Normal University on campus in late July. Those students attended two weeks of intensive classes led by Villamil and graduate student assistants Angela Gist and Jonathan Wickert.

During the trip to China, the three faculty members visited two different campuses of Shanghai Normal University (Fengxian Campus and Xuhui Campus), Shandong University of Technology in Zibo, and Northwest University of Agriculture and Forestry (near Xi’an) where they met with university administrators and faculty in related areas at each university. The host universities also took the faculty to visit several famous landmarks throughout China, including visits to the Great Wall, Confucius’ hometown, the Terra Cotta warriors in Xi’an, and the Forbidden City in Beijing.

Meisenbach thought the experience was one of the most amazing of her life. Though seeing the Terra Cotta warriors and Great Wall were incredible, her favorite moments were walking around a lake on the Shandong University of Technology campus. One nighttime walk was filled with young couples holding hands on benches around the lake, while the morning walk revealed groups of older men and women practicing Kung Fu fan work and Tai Chi in quiet, small groups all around the lake.

Ty Christian Wins Faculty–Alumni Award

Ty Christian, BA ’77, will receive one of the university’s most prestigious awards—the Faculty–Alumni Award—on Oct. 18, 2013. In the nomination letter, Michael Porter wrote, “I first met Ty in 2004 when he came to campus to receive an alumni award from the College of Arts and Science. He was an unknown to me, but after meeting him the first time, I realized that this was one individual I wanted to get to know better because I knew he would make a difference. Ty was not only a ‘mover,’ but he was also a proverbial ‘shaker.’ He knows how to shake things up, he knows how to get things done.”

Christian came to Mizzou to play football, and he left as a communicator. He is a marketing and sales executive with over 30 years of diverse marketing experience who began his career in marketing for the tourism industry. He realized that no one was reaching out to one particular demographic group—people of color. And so he did and did so very successfully. He is the president and managing partner of TRC Consulting Group LLC., a full-service communications firm with offices in Orlando and Washington, D.C. One of Christian’s major life accomplishments will always focus on his role in making the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial become a reality. He served as the chief marketing strategist for the project in order to raise $120 million to build the memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. A replica of the monument was donated to the university by Christian, and it resides in the lobby of Ellis Library.

His most recent project involves bringing recognition to slain civil rights icon Medgar Evers. Christian was asked by Alcorn State to do for Evers what he had done for King and help them to raise the funds to build a memorial to honor their alumnus. This, too, has become a labor of love and passion.

Christian is a member of the Arts and Science Strategic Development Board and is also a member of the department’s own Advisory Council. Congratulations, Ty!
Elizabeth (Lissa) Behm-Morawitz had a great year. Her research projects on the impact of social virtual worlds on health, body image, and well-being and her study on video games, race, and stereotyping were both published. She continues to examine media effects, with a focus on gender and racial/ethnic stereotyping, social identity, and health in interactive media contexts. Behm-Morawitz serves as a faculty eMentor on campus for ET@MO, sharing tips and advice on how to incorporate educational technologies into traditional and online courses at Mizzou. She is also redesigning the COMM 2100 course (Media Communication in Society) to include a prominent online component.

Melissa Click is working on projects related to audiences’ and fans’ relationships with media texts, including examinations of readers’ responses to Fifty Shades of Grey, the political attitudes Lady Gaga inspires in her fans, and Glee fans’ reactions to Cory Monteith’s death. Last year, she presented her work at University of Texas at Austin’s Flow conference, the American Studies Association, the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, and the International Communication Association (ICA). This year, Click will chair the department committee to bring the international media conference Console-ing Passions to the MU campus in April 2014. She will also serve as chair of ICA’s Popular Communication division.

Colleen Warner Colaner teaches courses in relational communication, family communication, and research methods. Her research focuses on communication in diverse families as well as the identity formation in personal and family relationships. Her current work examines communication in open adoption relationships. With support from a Richard Wallace Alumni Grant, Colaner is collecting data from adoptive parents who have ongoing interaction with their child’s birth parents to explore how communication about and with birth parents relates to child development. She is published in Adoption Quarterly, Journal of Family Communication, Communication Studies, and Sex Roles.

Debbie Dougherty had a fun and productive year. Freya (now two and a half years old!) entered daycare last year and brought home numerous illnesses that served to strengthen the family’s immune systems. In addition to caring for sick kids, she published two articles. One, with Francie Smith, received the top published paper of the year award from Management Communication Quarterly. Dougherty, along with two of her graduate students, Angela Gist and Jonathan Wickert, received a top paper award for her study on unemployment. She also received an award for her work with Jenny Dixon on alternative sexualities in the workplace. This spring she was honored with the Gold Chalk Award for excellence in graduate education.

Haley Kranstuber Horstman is thrilled to join the faculty as an assistant professor. She will continue her research on the ways family members communicate to make sense of their difficult experiences and identities. Her current projects include an investigation of family communication about credit card behaviors, which earned her and her co-author a top paper award at NCA and publication in the Journal of Family Communication. This year, Kranstuber Horstman will be exploring family sense-making in the contexts of mother–daughter relationships, adoptive families, and miscarriage.

Brian Houston co-directs the Terrorism and Disaster Center, a Category II center in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network that is funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. More information about the center is available at tdctc.missouri.edu. Houston is also part of a team funded by Mizzou Advantage to explore community resilience and media technologies. They are working with state and local government officials in Missouri to identify and address disaster communication needs. Most recently, Houston has been working with others to develop and validate scales that assess firearm attitudes, media use, and interpersonal communication.

Mitchell S. McKinney has been busy with a number of research activities following the exciting 2012 presidential election. He served as guest editor of a special issue of Argumentation and Advocacy and also as guest editor of a special issue of Communication Studies, with both focusing on the 2012 elections. Along with colleague Brian Houston, McKinney served as a 2012–13 research fellow with MU’s Reynolds Journalism Institute, examining the role of social media—and particularly Twitter—during the election. McKinney and Houston presented their work as part of the National Press Club symposium Twitterocracy:
How Social Media are Transforming Politics and Journalism in Washington, D.C., in April. In May, McKinney completed his term as president of the Central States Communication Association, presiding over the largest ever CSCA annual meeting, which was held in Kansas City. He is slated to become the department’s next chair in summer 2014.

Rebecca Meisenbach enjoyed la dolce vita this past fall in the Veneto region of Italy, teaching organizational communication and business and professional communication in the Cimba undergraduate program (www.cimbaitaly.com). Her participation in the May MU Global Scholars trip to China (with colleagues Astrid Villamil and Debbie Dougherty) was eye opening and amazing. This past summer she taught a few sessions for the department’s new July Summer Institute for Communication and Culture that was attended by students from Shanghai Normal University. Her sense of the world has broadened, and she hopes to help more of our own undergraduates find enriching global opportunities during their time at Mizzou. Her research focuses on questions of identity and stigma in a variety of organizational contexts.

Astrid Villamil’s teaching was recognized twice last year—once when the university awarded her the 2013 MU Faculty Achievement Award in Diversity and once by the Department of Communication graduate students, who named her the 2013 Teacher of the Year. Last year, Villamil mentored a student who presented a top paper at the Undergraduate Honor’s Conference at the 2013 Central States Communication Association convention. After traveling to China as part of the Global Scholars program, where she met with counterpart faculty from various universities with the purpose of exploring future opportunities for collaboration and exchange, she immediately went to Kansas where she helped to direct the Women’s Leadership Institute, a program that helps to acclimate college-aged women from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, and Mongolia into the world of academics. Villamil returned to Mizzou in July to host 18 students from Shanghai Normal University for two weeks of intensive organizational communication education. A busy summer, indeed.

Ben Warner spent much of the previous year wading through mountains of election data. Consequently, he has two articles coming out about presidential debates. One study summarizes the many effects debates have on viewers, and one documents the polarizing effect of debate viewing. He also had a study accepted for publication that illustrates the dangers associated with the spread of conspiracy theories in ideological media and the value of debunking information in mainstream media. Warner has also collaborated with various MU graduate students to write studies that chronicle the role of social media in the 2012 election, and another examines the way media and communication contributed to political polarization during the election. Warner also received the Federation Prize from the Central States Communication Association, an award accompanied by a cash prize to be spent on his polarization and political extremism research.

Attending this year’s NCA convention or live in the Washington D.C. area?

Please join the faculty and graduate students of the department for the annual reception at the NCA Convention.

Friday, Nov. 22, 2013
6:30–8:30 p.m.
Taft Room
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel
2660 Woodley Road NW
Washington, D.C.

NCA Convention
Congratulations to the 2013 Award-winning Students

Gradients

Graduate Achievement Award
Awarded to a student who demonstrates excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service. 
Angela Gist

Graduate Research Award
Given in recognition of superior research achievements. 
Joshua Hawthorne

Loren Reid Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award
Successful candidates must demonstrate excellence in teaching, inspire learning, practice creative thinking, and exhibit a generous spirit toward their students. 
Holly Holladay & Hyun Ji Lee

Graduate Service Award
Awarded to students who provided extraordinary service to the department. 
Angela Gist & Jonathan Wickert

Frank and Lila Gilman Memorial Fellowship
Given to the outstanding graduate student in rhetoric and public address. 
Sarah Turner McGowan

Undergrads

Several awards reflecting the foci of the department are given to outstanding graduating seniors who have demonstrated excellence in course work in their concentration, a strong overall GPA, and outstanding citizenship in the classroom.

The Mary-Jeanette Smythe Award
Outstanding Senior in Interpersonal Communication 
Xixi Tian

Outstanding Senior in Organizational Communication
Megan Monsees

Outstanding Senior in Political Communication
Devon Slavens

Outstanding Senior in Mass Media
Derek Hartley

The G. Joseph Wolfe Award
Outstanding Senior in Media Production
Philip Guignon

The Loren Reid Award
Outstanding Leadership and Service to the Department
Ashley Reece

Welcome 2013 Graduate Students!

In August, the department welcomed 10 new graduate students:

Joshua Bolton—MA, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, area: political communication
Nettie Brock—MA, San Francisco State University, area: mass media
Grace Choi—MA, DePaul University, area: mass media
Heidi Człapinska—BA, Bethel University, area: political communication/Terrorism & Disaster Center
Alexie Hays—MA, Illinois State University, area: interpersonal communication

Joseph Hoffswell—MA, Northern Illinois University, area: mass media
Megan Koch—BA, Boston College, area: organizational communication
Ryan Maliski—MA, San Diego State University, area: interpersonal communication
Jessica Rick—MA, North Dakota State University, area: organizational communication
Mary Sorenson—MA, Illinois State University, area: political communication
Houston Receives Department’s Largest Grant

By Laura Lindsey
J. Brian Houston, assistant professor in the Department of Communication, was awarded a $2.4-million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to establish the Terrorism and Disaster Center (TDC) at the University of Missouri. The center will focus on enhancing mental and behavioral health preparedness, recovery, and resilience in children, families, and communities affected by disaster, and it will increase public awareness of these issues.

The funding, which began on Oct. 1, 2012, and will continue until September 30, 2016, designates TDC as a category II center in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). Houston is principal investigator of the SAMHSA grant and will serve as co-director of TDC.

“This work is very interdisciplinary, so it is exciting to have funding to support bringing together a variety of academic and community perspectives,” says Houston. “It’s our goal to develop interventions, resources, and materials that benefit children, families, and communities experiencing disasters or other crises. This funding will help us achieve that goal.”

TDC will work with community and school partners in Joplin, Kansas City, St. Louis, and New Orleans to develop, implement, and evaluate interventions and resources. Houston has hired several graduate students and a clinical social worker to help with intervention development, training, implementation, and evaluation, and a part-time instructional technologist to help with online content development.

“Puncky Heppner, Curators’ Professor of Education, will assist with cultural issues related to the grant. This grant is the largest ever received by a faculty member in the communication department. “It is humbling,” says Houston. “This department is incredibly strong and fosters an environment of multidisciplinary work. These conditions contribute to securing this type of funding.”

Student Discovers Her Calling During Internship

By Laura Lindsey

Thanks to the support of the department’s Advisory Council, senior Kelsey Brown had the experience of a lifetime in New York over the summer interning with Fox’s ad sales department. Brown was the first recipient of the Department of Communication Student Opportunities Fund, which is designed to encourage students to challenge themselves so they can have valuable learning experiences from a major player in the communication field. She received $1,000 to assist with her expenses.

“The cost of living in New York is high, so the support the board gave me lifted a huge weight off my family,” says Brown. “I’m so honored that I was chosen to receive the scholarship. It means the world to me to think that the communication department believes in me and thinks I’m worth investing in.”

Brown’s main responsibility during her internship was to convince a retailer to advertise with Fox. It was an extensive two-month project that she worked on with five other interns. At the end of the summer, she gave a presentation for the company’s employees.

“I learned what it’s like to be a part of the working world,” says Brown. “Being able to do a real project and getting hands-on experience was so valuable. I learned how real negotiations are made and about company culture. I couldn’t have learned those things in a classroom.”

After this experience, Brown realizes that her skill set aligns well with the industry, and she plans to pursue advertising sales as a career.

Internships have always been a great way for students to gain first-hand knowledge of a potential career, but since most internships are unpaid, some students have a hard time taking advantage of these opportunities. The Advisory Council is working on changing that through this fund. Their goal is to award three students $2,000 each to assist them with a variety of opportunities. By making a financial investment in today’s students, a brighter future can be created for all of us.

Advisory Council members Deb Snellen and Stan Silvey (on either end) with Chair Michael Porter and Kelsey Brown, when Brown received her internship support.
MU to Host Feminist Media Conference

By Melissa Click
We are very excited to have been selected as the host for the 2014 Console-ing Passions conference. Founded by a group of feminist media scholars and artists in 1989, Console-ing Passions held its first official conference at the University of Iowa in 1992. Since that time, Console-ing Passions has become the leading international scholarly network for feminist research in television, video, audio, and new media.

This year’s conference is being organized by department faculty Melissa Click and Lissa Behm-Morawitz, and doctoral students Holly Holladay, Hyunji Lee, and Amanda Edgar. Influential feminist media scholar, Angela McRobbie, professor of communication, Goldsmiths, University of London, will be this year’s keynote speaker. Console-ing Passions will take place April 10–12, 2014. Follow us on twitter! @CPMissouri2014

Course Overhaul: COMM 2100

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of students being distracted by the very technology about which we are trying to educate them. Thus, putting lectures online means that the students can learn when they want to learn, instead of when the teacher is ready to teach. They can access the online materials in a “self-serve” way, and we can cut down on unnecessary class time in which students become restless and then turn to their computers and other mobile devices.

The redesign team is organizing the content of the course into weekly learning “modules,” in which each module will consist of readings, online lectures, online assessments, videos, assignments, and face-to-face meetings in a more intimate (25-person) discussion lab. The idea is that students will come to class with a solid conceptual understanding of the facts, definitions, and theories at hand, and will be ready to apply these facts to real-world applications in class.

The redesign team is currently filming interactive videos and preparing to pilot some “hybrid flip” elements as Professor Michael Porter teaches the course this fall 2013 semester. In spring 2014, the full redesign will roll out, and assessments of the course changes will follow in summer 2014. We are excited to usher in a new, and hopefully, more interactive and engaging era of learning for COMM 2100 students.